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# THE JAPANESE SWORD AND ITS DECORATION

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NUMBER 20

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## The Japanese Sword and Its Decoration

The sword of Japan may be called a key to the study of the history, folk-lore, and customs of the country. In its changing form there can be traced the influences of important military events and certain characteristics due to contact with the outside world, while on the carefully wrought fittings have been pictured the heroes, gods, mythological beings, symbols, and articles of daily use, each full of interest and worthy of study. For centuries the art and skill of many generations of craftsmen have been lavished upon its decoration. Up to 1876 all samurai or military men were privileged to carry two swords, the katana and the wakizashi. The first was the weapon with which they fought, settling personal quarrels and clan feuds, or defending their feudal lord, for whose sake each one was proud and ready to die at any moment. The other, the wakizashi, was a shorter weapon generally uniform in decoration with the katana, for these two were worn together thrust through the belt, and were spoken of as *dai-sho*, meaning "large and small."

The wakizashi was always worn indoors. The katana, however, was removed on entering a private house and, as proof of trust in one's host, it was laid upon the *katana-kake*, a rack placed near the entrance. The



wakizashi was especially dear to the samurai, for with it he could follow his feudal chief in death, or, rather than be taken prisoner by the enemy, he could perform the "happy dispatch." If condemned to death, he was privileged to take his own life rather than suffer the disgrace of public execution. This form of suicide is known as *harakiri* and consists of a fatal crosscut over the abdomen, practically amounting to disembowelment. Through generations of fighting, the samurai had developed an unsurpassed bravery and a spirit of self-abnegation, which it is difficult to understand without studying the philosophy and history of the Japanese warrior. When Japan opened her gates to the world in 1868, after two centuries of isolation, she was living under a feudal organization of great intricacy, so powerful that many have been confused into thinking that the shōgun was a ruler in the same sense as the emperor. He was merely the generalissimo, the military commander of the feudal lords, but he had so usurped the power of administration that the emperor was removed from the vision of his people, occupying more the place of a deity rather than that of a ruler. However, never in the history of Japan through all her years of civil strife, has the supreme right to rule been denied to the "Heavenly born" emperor. No matter how bitter his enemies nor how domineering the military authority, in the last analysis none of them ever denied the divine right of the Mikado, the descendant of the Sun Goddess.

Through centuries of feudalism, Japan had become divided into many provinces, each one presided over by a feudal lord or daimyō who was supported by many armed retainers. From 1636 to 1853 the nation dwelt in complete isolation and peace. This fact tended to make that period known as the Tokugawa period, one in which luxury and refinement is reflected in all the



belongings of the military class. The armour and swords of this day were made for adornment rather than for fighting. The yearly processions of the daimyō to Yedo, whither they were required to come under the shōgun's order, have been depicted on many a print and were occasions on which the armed retainers, in full regalia, reflected the elegance of their chief's domain. To these days of luxury belonged most of the swords and fittings which appeared in the European market a few years following the Restoration of 1868 when Japan renounced the old military domination and determined to become one of the nations of the world.

The sword, however, had had a most grim part to play in the centuries preceding the rule of the Tokugawa shōguns. From the time of the introduction of Buddhism from China through Korea in A.D. 552, there are records of wars religious, foreign, and civil, up until the seventeenth century. There was developed along with the military organization which evolved through centuries of warfare, a reverence for the sword which made it the warrior's most cherished possession. It was in very truth "the soul of the samurai." The story of the blade cannot be entered into here save to say that it rivaled in keenness that of Damascus, and sword-blade making in Japan was considered from early times a sacred craft, only entered upon after purification and fasting. Blades were handed down from generation to generation as the esteemed protectors of families. Loving the sword as the samurai did, beauty was added to strength and from the sixteenth century on, artists of great rank applied their skill and taste to the adorning of the mounts both of hilt and scabbard. A samurai might possess only one trusted blade, but more than likely he would have four or five sets of fittings which he could

adjust for different occasions. In 1876 when the edict was issued prohibiting the samurai wearing two swords, it is estimated that there were two million of this calling who laid down their precious weapons. Many had to sell their swords on account of the discontinuance of their hereditary incomes, and hundreds of others disposed of them because the cherished distinction which was the samurai's had become a thing of the past.

The fittings of the katana and the wakizashi have been decorated for centuries by artists who literally painted in metal some of the choicest examples of pictorial art and chiselled designs which have charmed many a collector and gained the admiration of metalcraftsmen everywhere. All of the mounts offer a very limited field for expression. Of these, the tsuba or sword-guard, the largest of the mounts, received the attention of many of the best artists. It is that plaque of metal which fits between the hilt and the blade, thus affording a guard for the hand. It is securely fastened to the tang by a collar of metal, called *fuchi*. This mount almost always supplements in decoration the cap or pommel (*kashira*) terminating the hilt. On either side of the *kashira* are openings through which passes the wrapping of the hilt, thus securing this fitting tightly. Immediately below the *kashira* are two ornaments known as *menuki*. They cover the rivets, which fasten the tang, and aid in giving a firmer grip upon the weapon. Occasionally there are other *menuki* which decorate the scabbard. When of a larger size than the ordinary, they are called *kanamono*, (literally, "hardware"), a most misleading term, for they are of a purely artistic nature and quality.

The tsuba has the triangular opening in the center through which the tang passes, and often one or two holes on either side of the central opening which are

called *riohitsu*. Through these apertures pass two of the most decorative fittings: the *kozuka* and the *kogai*. Each of them slips into a groove on either side of the scabbard, which is sometimes finished with an ornamental band, called the *uragawara*. The *kozuka* is the small knife with a single edge which probably served much the same purposes that a pocket knife serves. The *kogai* does not possess a blade but it is in the form of a skewer, sometimes of one piece and again divided lengthwise through the center into two pieces. In the latter form it was used as a pair of chop-sticks or as hairpins to rearrange the hair which had become dishevelled beneath the helmet. This object is decorated as is the *kozuka* on the handle. Together with the *menuki*, these three fittings are called *mitokoromono* ("objects of the three pieces"). They were generally made by one artist. On the scabbard is a cleat, called the *kurigata*, through which a cord was threaded. This cleat held the scabbard more securely in the belt when the sword was drawn. The cord (*sageo*), when not attached to the belt, was often used to tie back the sleeves to give freer action for fighting. The lower end of the scabbard is finished with a cap sometimes similar to the *kashira* or occasionally much deeper in form. It is called the *kojiri*.

As will be seen in the following pages, bronze, iron, and steel were the metals employed exclusively in making the earlier *tsuba*, and many of the artists of later days preferred to work in these harder and sterner mediums. However, they sought variety of effect through acid baths from which the iron obtained rare patinas and rich colors of chocolate brown and velvety black. The recipes for the production of patinas on iron as well as on the alloys are among the hidden treasures of the Japanese artist. It is almost impossible to reproduce a rare patina once it has become scratched or rubbed.



The principal alloys used are those known as *shakudō* and *shibuichi*. *Shakudō* is composed of 95 per cent copper,  $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$  per cent gold,  $1$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent silver with traces of lead, iron, and arsenic, according to analyses made by Roberts-Austen and W. Gowland. It is subjected to an acid treatment which brings forth a patina of dark blue or purplish hue. *Shibuichi*, composed of 50-67 per cent copper, 30-50 per cent silver with traces of gold and iron, assumes through the pickling solution soft tones shading from greens to grays. Copper and brass are also treated with great effectiveness, and used both for the fields and the motives adorning the mounts.

The surface decorations are quite as remarkable in variety and quality as the metals used. Those most frequently met with are *mokume*, *guri-bori*, *nanako*, *ishime*, and *jimigakii* or polished surface. The first (*mokume*, meaning "the grain of wood") is used to describe the remarkable welding together of separate layers of iron, or the fusing of a pure metal with an alloy such as copper and *shakudō*. In the case of iron, the surface is pounded, molded, bent and punched until the layers when filed give the effect of worn wood. Acid is often resorted to also, which corrodes the sheets of varying hardness. In the case of the alloy in combination with another metal, the same process is employed, that of folding and molding and filing. The object is then pickled in a solution which brings forth the different colors desired.

*Guri-bori* is a surface imitating carved lacquer. The metals generally employed to produce this effect are also copper and *shakudō* of alternate layers sometimes up to the number of seventeen. They are most skillfully welded together and then carved, in scroll-like curves with slanting sides, with such accuracy that half of the layers are exposed on either side of the

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1-3, MOUNTS BY KANEIYE (p. 11), GOTŌ YŪJŌ (p. 12) AND JAKUSHI (p. 13).

tsuba, the alternating colors producing a striped effect; only the central layer is left untouched.

Nanako, though not a purely Japanese process, has been brought to a wonderful degree of perfection by the metal-craftsmen of that country. The literal meaning of nanako is fish-roë. It consists of regular impressions made with a small hollow punch arranged in lines, either straight or concentric, and is sometimes made to alternate with diamond forms of plain surface. It was the ground preferred by the early Gotō masters and was used exclusively on court swords during a certain period. It varies in size and exactness of execution; that of the Gotō and Sano Schools being unusually perfect in form (Plate I, Fig. 2).

Ishime ("stone-surface") is a broad term which describes any irregular surface decoration other than nanako, mokume, or yasurime (lines representing rain). It includes leather-grain, pear-skin, silk texture, and many other effects, such as, tree-bark and stone markings.

The two main processes of inlaying are known as *honzōzan* ("true inlay") and *nunome-zōgan* ("cloth inlay"). In the case of *honzōgan*, the metal is hammered securely into grooves which are cut wider at the bottom than at the top. It is finished either as flat inlay (*hirazōgan*) or as raised inlay (*takazōgan*). *Nunome-zōgan* is produced by hammering the inlay upon a surface which has been cross-hatched and scratched to a texture-like appearance, in the little threads of which the inlay gains a hold. This process may often be discovered upon pieces that are worn. *Sumi-zōgan* (literally, "ink-inlay") is used with great effect by the artists of the Tsuji school. The object to be inlaid is fully chiselled out with slanting sides. It is then hammered into the space which has been channeled in the field, of the exact dimensions of the



inlay. With grinding and polishing the inlay becomes so united with the field that the effect is that of painting in ink, under the surface.

The most common form of chiselling is that known as *kebori* ("hair carving"). The lines are of a uniform thickness and depth, and have the effect of engraving. *Katakiribori* is that type of chiselling which suggests the lines of a painter's brush. The strokes are of unequal width and depth, each having a value in the design. They were performed with one effort by the great artists, especially those of the Yokoya school. Sculpturing in the round is called *sukashibori*. It is generally applied to tsuba of iron whose designs are made in positive silhouette.

The earliest type of Japanese sword of which we have any knowledge is that found in the Yamato tombs, which, according to tradition, date from the second century B.C. to the eighth century A.D. These swords are weapons of iron, single-edged, straight and fitted with a separate tsuba, which even in those early days seems to have been an important accessory. These tsuba are of copper covered with a gilding. They are oval in form, perforated with trapezoidal holes which may have been made for decorative purposes as well as for lightening the weapon.

Other early swords unearthed are double-edged and short, having a peculiar hilt in the form of a diamond trefoil or thunderbolt (*vajra*). This shape has persisted through centuries as the sword used in the Buddhist rituals. It is to be seen in many of the early stone carvings and paintings of certain Buddhist divinities, as well as in some of the temple ceremonies of the present time.

Belonging to the ninth century, probably, is the early type of *tachi*, a long sword, the scabbard of which

bears two *ashi* or feet. Through these are threaded braids or chains with which the sword is suspended from the belt. Many tachi are curved, and some are of extreme length, often exceeding five feet. They were brandished with both hands, and must have been effective weapons at the time of the Mongolian invasion in 1281. The ceremonial tachi is generally straight, and several are short. In certain examples the scabbards are highly ornamented, reflecting in the inlaid lacquer the influence of China which pervaded all branches of art in Japan at that time. The tsuba on these swords is of a shape called *shitogi* because of its resemblance to a rice-cake of that name used in Shintō ceremonies.

This narrow form of guard was sufficient for use at the luxurious Fujiwara court, but a stronger protection was needed for the many years of fighting which began with the long and bitter struggle known as the War of the Gen (Minamoto) and Heike (Taira) clans, the war in the twelfth century which eventually placed Japan under military domination for seven centuries. Tradition tells us that the guard of this period (Gempei) and that immediately preceding was either a plain iron disk, or was made of rawhide. The leather was sometimes lacquered, in which case the guard was called *neri tsuba*, or again it was made more efficacious by being affixed between two thin iron plates called *dai seppa*. These were either plain or ornamented with a pierced decoration.

The *aoi tsuba* is another early form of guard. It is so called from its outline which suggests the heart-shaped leaves of the mallow (*aoi*). Often the entire surface is decorated with floral motives, and again the ornament covers only the central portion. This form has ever been popular, many nineteenth-century guards being of this shape.

Square and oblong tsuba with rounded corners are to be seen among the drawings of early guards in books and in certain paintings. During the Ashikaga period (fourteenth to sixteenth century), fighting became fiercer, and there are accounts of swords being set up, the guards of which served for steps in scaling the enemies' walls. From such weapons may come the large square and circular guards with simple decorations in openwork, which served to ornament and lighten the heavy tachi. The katana in time superseded the large tachi as a fighting weapon, the latter becoming the ceremonial sword carried at court and worn on stately occasions. As far as is known all of the early guards were made by swordsmiths and armorers, and many of them bear the hammer-marks of the armorer as the sole decoration.

During the latter part of the Ashikaga period, however, the sword received the attention of certain artists who were the founders of the first schools of guard-makers. Among them must be mentioned Nobuiye. He was the first member of the famous family of armorers, the Myōchin, to be recorded as a tsuba maker. He used perforated designs as well as surface modelling, and often finished the field or edge of the guard with the tortoise-back pattern. He was succeeded by many generations of followers.

Whether Nobuiye was the first artist to decorate guards is a question, for the date of the great master Kaneiye is quite uncertain. Both of these artists, however, probably lived in the sixteenth century. The name of Kaneiye Shōdai is held in the highest esteem by all the metal-craftsmen of Japan. He was the first artist to apply to iron guards those processes which Gotō Yujō used only upon the smaller sword-mounts. There are three artists of the name of Kaneiye, as well as a host of followers and imitators. Among the many

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1, SWORD-GUARD BY KINAI (p. 14). 2, SWORD-GUARD CARVED FROM IRON (p. 15).



thousands of pieces signed "Made by Kaneiye of Fushimi in Yamashiro" there are very few genuine specimens, as will be readily recognized once one is privileged to examine an authentic product. All three Kaneiye worked in iron of a rich brown color and wax-like quality. Sometimes there are traces of lacquer upon the surface. The forms preferred were oval, *mokkō*, which is quadrilobed, and *kobushi* ("fist-shaped"). The first Kaneiye is said to have chosen for his subjects personages, while Kaneiye Nidai, the greatest of the three, was the master of landscapes. The third Kaneiye is thought to have favored birds and flowers. Many of the subjects of Kaneiye guards are taken from the paintings of Sesshū, a contemporary landscapist whose work was permeated with the spirit of the Zen sect of Buddhism, that philosophy which sought calm in the contemplation of nature. During the Ashikaga period, the Zen sect had a large following, especially appealing to the samurai. The exquisite expressions of nature's calm moods which Kaneiye chose are modelled in low relief, sometimes lightened by a sparing use of gold or silver, perhaps applied to dewdrops on the grass or to the bill of a wild goose hidden in the rushes. On these small pieces of sword-furniture there is to be seen in consummate form that masterful simplicity which is the foremost characteristic of the great Japanese artists (Plate I, Fig. 1).

Gotō Yujō (1435-1512), as was remarked above, decorated only the small mounts, preferring them to the larger field of the tsuba. He is known as the "father of chasing," and was the first metal-craftsman to have decorated in relief of precious metals the fittings of the sword. The style which he instituted, called *iyebori* ("family chasing"), was followed with more or less accuracy by sixteen generations of artists

who are known as the "Sixteen Masters." Working almost entirely for the rich daimyō, pieces made by the early Gotō are of extreme scarcity and value. They are rarely seen outside Japan, where, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became fashionable to possess a series of Gotō fittings almost always accompanied by certificates proving them genuine. Preferring the softer metals or alloys, almost all of the early masters used shakudō for the field, choosing a nanako ground upon which the reliefs of gold and silver showed up brilliantly.

For subjects they preferred dragons, plants, small figures, and mythical animals, such as the Chinese lion (*shishi*) with curly tail, or the kirin, a composite beast with scaly body, a dragon's or horse's head, a single horn, and flame-like appendages at the shoulders. The kozuka (Plate I, Fig. 2) is by Shinjō, the fifteenth master, who lived in the nineteenth century, signing much of his work Mitsuyoshi. The nanako ground is of a fineness and exactness of execution characteristic of the later Gotō work. After the third generation much of the formal style was abandoned; and in the work of many eighteenth and nineteenth century artists of this school great individuality was expressed. Gotō Ichijō, born in 1789, was one of the great modern tsuba artists having a following of many pupils, chief among them Funada Ikkin.

It must be remembered that the early Gotōs worked expressly for the court and the daimyōs, and that the sword in general was not at that time so richly ornamented. Certain inlays, such as those designated as Fushimi-Yoshirō, were evidently popular in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Decorated either in flat inlay or brass or in a relief of brass, these iron tsuba present an attractive appearance, as well as a strong protection for the hand of the warrior. The



floral designs, though in many cases rather crude in form, possess a certain charm. A peculiar surface decoration which is known as *gomoku-zōgan* (literally, "dirt inlay") is sometimes combined with brass crests, which from that time on (seventeenth century) appear frequently. Gomoku zōgan consists of scraps of brass wire apparently applied at random.

Other peculiar guards, such as Shingen and Namban, date from that period. Shingen tsuba take their name from that of the great general, Takeda Shingen, who advocated this type of guard on account of its lightness. There are four distinct forms listed under this category which cannot be described here save to say that in each case they are decorated with wire laced or inlaid in the iron. One example in the collection of Field Museum is of iron with brass centre, to the edges of which is affixed a weaving of brass and copper wires which are bound to the foundation disk by a rim with simple decoration. Tsuba called Namban ("southern barbarians" or "foreigners") are generally ornamented with a Chinese motive, the two dragons struggling for the possession of a jewel. Sometimes touched with gilt nunome, they are skilfully wrought within a network of entwining tendrils, chiselled out of a brownish iron. Many are the imitations of Namban tsuba as well as those of several other schools. Dealers in ready-made articles (*shiiremono*), always found a ready market among the merchants who, in the eighteenth century, wore swords along with their writing-cases in their belts. Foreign traders at Nagasaki were also led into buying spurious pieces of sword-furniture, many of which unfortunately found their way into European collections.

Living at Nagasaki in the seventeenth century and seeing the products from foreign countries which came in for trade, was one Jakushi, an artist both in paint-

ing and metal-work. He made many beautiful guards, taking for his subjects scenes from Chinese paintings. Using the process of *nunome* very skilfully, he "painted" in varying shades of gold many charming landscapes done in great detail (Plate I, Fig. 3).

Inlaying had reached a high state of perfection by that time, when both processes *hirazōgan* and *nunome-zōgan* were applied to many pieces of sword-furniture. One of the foremost exponents of inlay and one of the greatest of all *tsuba* masters was Umetada Myōju, otherwise Shigeyoshi, who, working in Kyōto in the early seventeenth century, originated a method of flat inlay on brass and copper. Products from his chisel are exceedingly rare. There is in this collection a *tsuba* of copper, unsigned and of wonderful patina, which bears a strong resemblance to examples known to have been made by Myōju. On one side, inlaid in fine gold wire, are two flying birds and a flute of *shakudō* with gold trimmings. On the reverse in flat inlay of *shakudō*, gold, and silver, are two weapons in the form of a chained hoe which were used in ancient times by women as defensive weapons when a city was besieged. Accompanying this *tsuba* is a scroll describing the decoration and stating that the guard once belonged to the *shōgun*, Tokugawa Iyeyasu, who gave it to Nakamura Shirozaemon, a faithful samurai. It is well not to put too much confidence in such documents, for they have also been forged as have many pieces of metal-work. But, as is the case here, when the treasure described has certain intrinsic qualities, one is inclined to give them serious consideration.

There were many schools of artists who clung to the use of iron and disdained inlay of any kind. To this group belonged Kinai I of Echizen, a masterful carver of the seventeenth century. He knew the methods of producing rare effects through pickling and



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1, SWORD-GUARD BY SŌTEN (p. 15). 2, SWORD-GUARD BY JŌI (p. 17).

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treating iron, preferring a rich black tone styled by some writers as a magnetic oxide. Many of the guards by Kinai were made for the daimyō of Echizen, who in turn presented them to the shōgun, probably on the former's annual visit to Yedo. These were called *kenjō tsuba* ("presentation tsuba"). Imitators of Kinai were numerous, and several of them adorned their products with gold inlay which serves to distinguish them from those of the master. Dragons were among the favorite designs of Kinai I and Kinai II, and cranes (Plate II, Fig. 1), masks, and shells in groups often appeared signed with this name.

In this short outline of the different schools of artists who decorated the sword, only the most prominent names can be mentioned.

Before leaving the tsuba of iron carved in designs of positive and negative silhouette, a glance must be given to those done in the province of Higo where most of the artists were retainers of the great Hosokawa family. Delicate sprays of the cherry or plum tree, crests of intricate design, cranes with spread wings and sprays of the graceful kiri plant (*Paulownia imperialis*) are some of the motives which place these guards among the most admired specimens of the metal-worker. Often the dark iron is embellished with the inlay of brilliant gold threads applied in tiny spirals or in designs of diamond shape. Difficult to distinguish from Higo guards are the lacy carvings made in Akasaka of a brown iron, so chiselled that the part cut away exceeds that which remains to form the delicate picture. In Bushū were made certain guards called Itōzukashi or Odawara tsuba. Sometimes they are of iron and occasionally of shakudo, marvels of intricate saw-cutting in diaper patterns (Plate II, Fig. 2).

Sōten of Hikone in the province of Gōshū should not be passed over, both on account of the real merit of



his sword-fittings and more especially because of the historical interest of the subjects chosen. From the hundreds of so-called Sōten guards, which seem to be everywhere, this artist has been given a false representation. These copies are in general crudely made and devoid of any artistic merit. The tsuba of the two Sōten and their pupils, on the other hand, are admirable specimens of carving in iron with inlays of gold, silver, and copper used to very good effect. Most of the subjects are taken from the pages of history, and portray in detail some of Japan's greatest heroes as they appeared in battle array. The incident illustrated here (Plate III, Fig. 1) is one of the most thrilling in the history of the country, that moment at the battle of Dan-no-Ura (1185) when the dowager-empress leaped into the waves with the boy emperor, Antoku, on seeing that the Taira were defeated hopelessly by the Minamoto clan. This is the typical Sōten guard, and is its own argument for being included along with other examples of the mastery of technique and design which has been attained by the Japanese artist.

In the early seventeenth century, the Nara school was founded by Toshiteru, a Yedo artist. This school is one of the largest and most widely known, having an influence over many groups of artists, equalled only by that of the Gotō. The earlier masters of the Nara school often employed iron, while the greater number used the softer metals, perfecting the style called *iroye* ("colored picture"), painted from the rich palette of the alloys. From the latter part of the seventeenth century on, the purely decorative mission of the sword is evident, the fighting weapon being needed only in the settlement of personal quarrels or an occasional uprising of minor importance.

Taking their inspiration directly from nature, the Nara artists depicted birds and insects, flowers and

trees, with a grace which makes one marvel at the complete mastery which these metal-craftsmen had over their tools and the unresponsive mediums with which they had to work. Historical and legendary subjects made their appeal to many, and these are portrayed in detail, generally amid natural surroundings of real beauty. The three great names of the Nara School are Toshinaga I, Jōi, and Yasuchika. Toshinaga I was the second artist of this name, and was followed by a son who signed his name identically, but fortunately used a different written seal (*kakihan*). Both men modelled figures with exceeding skill; the father, however, was much more thorough in his execution and detail. Jōi's work is characterized generally by the use of a recessed relief or intaglio *relievato* which gives the effect of the object rising out of the metal. His surface treatments are remarkable, especially in the case of copper-bronze, which forms the guard here illustrated (Plate III, Fig. 2), where Hotei, the household god beloved by children, leans over his treasure bag.

Of the six artists named Yasuchika, all used the same characters in their signatures, and one or two adopted the same *noms de plumes* as those of the first master. This is a typical instance of the confusion one is constantly meeting in sifting the facts relevant to this branch of study. Yasuchika I and his son Yasuchika II favored purely decorative motives, having been influenced to a large extent by Kōrin, the famous painter and designer. The decoration on the *tsuba* (Plate IV, Fig. 1) might be characterized as "the survival of the fittest." On a *shibuichi* ground in relief of gold and copper is a vine tinged with autumn colorings, food for the slimy snail crawling along on the obverse. A tiny frog, the snail's devourer, is on the reverse, while a serpent moulded in silver glides out from its hiding-place.



Most of the Nara artists worked in Yedo, the shōgun's capital, which by that time had attracted craftsmen in every art. Of the many schools which trace their origin to the Nara masters, that of the Hamano is probably the most famous. It was founded by Masayuki, a pupil of Toshinaga I. He and his many followers worked in Yedo in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries producing sword-fittings decorated for the most part with figures, historical and legendary. Noriyuki and Kaneyuki have left some beautiful specimens of craftsmanship and design, well illustrated in the two kozuka here reproduced. On that by Noriyuki (Plate IV, Fig. 2), Hitomaro, one of Japan's favorite poets, is portrayed. Above him is engraved one of his most famous poems, the one relating to the beach at Akashi. Calligraphy is considered as great an art as painting, and this which is deftly cut in hard metal is evidence indeed of the hand of a master artist. The kozuka by Chikayuki (Plate IV, Fig. 3) illustrates an interesting New Year's custom, that of the householder scattering dried beans in order to drive out any lurking demons.

Another great name known by all lovers of Japanese metal-work is that of Yokoya Sōmin. He was the founder of the Yokoya school, a school whose influence can be traced in several groups, such as the Yanagawa, Iwamoto, and Ishiguro, all founded by pupils of Yokoya artists. The work of Sōmin is extremely rare, two menuki being the only examples in this collection which bear his signature and impress. He was the originator and perfecter of the style known as *katakiribori*, previously defined, using his chisel with the surety and effectiveness with which the painter makes his brush strokes.

Yanagawa fittings are generally rich, sometimes even to ornateness in their adornment. The peony and



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1-3, MOUNTS BY NARA AND HAMANO ARTISTS (pp. 15-16).

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the lion (*botan-ni-karashishi*), a subject often used by the Yokoya artists, is a most typical motive of decoration for these later craftsmen who also worked in Yedo. The Ishiguro school founded by a Yanagawa pupil is renowned for the beauty and detail with which the bird and flower decorations are wrought out. These fittings are typical of the elegance of the samurai of the early nineteenth century, who spent much of his time in luxurious ease, enjoying the peaceful arts of painting and literature, filling his moments with those pursuits which made him the scholar-gentleman of Japan.

The name of Ōmori and Ichinomiya, the Tetsugendō, Tanaka, Tamagawa, and Uchikoshi schools will only be mentioned before passing on to the three great moderns who were the last to ornament the sword. Ōmori Teruhide executed in shibuichi and shakudō some wonderful bits of sculpture usually adorned with undercut waves of minute dimensions. Ichinomiya Nagatsune was one of the finest chasers in the history of Japanese metal-work. His art was recognized by the emperor who bestowed upon him the title of Echizen-no-daijō, which is one of the appellations occasionally seen inscribed along with the signatures of famous artists. Other honorary titles are Hōgen, Hōin, and Hokyō.

In the fittings made by Naoshige of the Tetsugendō school and those carved by Tanaka Tōryūsai, that masterful treatment in iron is again met with, iron so perfectly patinated that it has the appearance of soft brown wax.

The Tamagawa school was one of the many groups of artists working in Mito, a city where dwelt many famous families of metal-craftsmen, among them the Hitotsuyanagi and the Sekijōken. One of the Tamagawa pupils, Hironaga, founded the Uchikoshi school

in the early nineteenth century. Working both on iron and the alloid foundations, he and his followers left many charming reliefs in precious metals.

The three great modern artists who made sword-fittings were Gotō Ichijō, Haruaki Hōgen of the Yanagawa school, and Kanō Natsuō, a member of the Ōtsuki school of Kyōto. Gotō Ichijō was preëminently a maker of tsuba which his predecessors had only made by special request, having generally applied their art to the smaller mounts. His preference for iron was another feature in which he broke away from the family traditions, for seldom does one see the ornaments beloved by the early Gotō masters applied to this field. To be sure, Gotō Ichijō both made the smaller fittings and also used the alloys, as may be seen on a fuchikashira in the museum collection where golden peonies with the leaves and branches of shakudō are set in high relief on a nanako ground.

Haruaki or Shummei Hōgen, though a pupil of Yanagawa Naoharu, shows in his relief the influence of the Gotō school and in his katakiribori a careful study of the technique of Yokoya Sōmin. These two processes Haruaki was fond of combining in one specimen. On the obverse of a tsuba in this collection, in well rounded reliefs of silver, shakudō, and gold, is Rinnasei, Chinese poet and lover of the plum-tree beneath which he stands with his young attendant. On the obverse, in katakiribori and hirazōgan, an old sage is drawn with characteristic strength and mastery.

Kanō Natsuō lived to see the abolition of feudalism and the resignation of the weapon which had received the loving attention of artists for many generations. Like many another metal-worker he reflected the art of a great painter. Natsuō, a student of the Maruyama school, came under the influence of Okyō,



whose realistic nature studies he often adapted to his scheme of decoration. The drawings of the carp, ascending the waterfall or leaping to catch a fly, have given Natsuō a place among the masters both on account of their artistic appeal and because of the excellent technique with which they are executed.

It is hoped that the foregoing remarks will allow one to appreciate what a place the sword has held in the heart of the military class and what an interesting study is opened up in the serious consideration of the art and thought which have been directed toward the beautifying of this weapon. From the specimens exhibited in Gunsaulus Hall students will find many gateways through which they may pass to a fuller understanding of the life and culture of Japan.

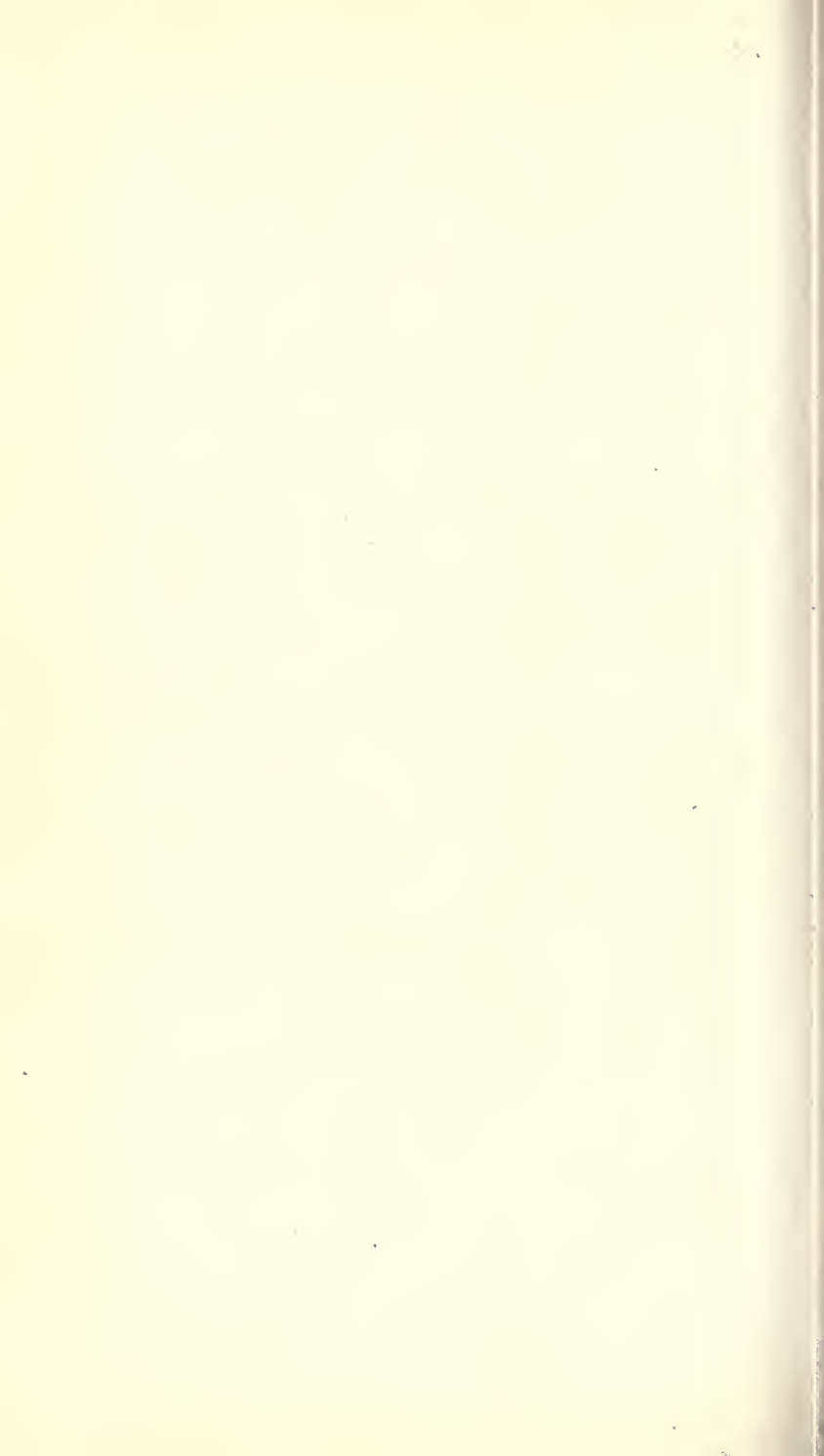
Those desirous of more information are referred to Field Museum Publication 216 in which the subject is dealt with in detail.

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